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SKETCHES
OF
FACTS AND OPINIONS
RESPECTING THE
VENEREAL DISEASE.

BY WILLIAM HOULSTON,

MEMBER OF THE CORPORATION OF SURGEONS; FELLOW
OF THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES AND OF THE MEDICAL
SOCIETY OF LONDON; AND SURGEON TO THE PHI-
LANTHROPIC REFORM.

*"Accepit nova fama fidem, populosque per omnes
"Prodiit haud fallax medicamen, ceptaque primum
"Misceri argento fluitanti axungia porcae."*

FRACASTORIUS.



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1792.

SMITHSONIAN

RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

OF THE

AMERICAN DISCOVERY

IN THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

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TO
STEPHEN WHITE WARNE, Esq.

SURGEON AT WEYMOUTH,

WHOSE PRIVATE WORTH AND PROFESSIONAL ABILITIES

ARE ALIKE EXEMPLARY ;

THE FOLLOWING PERFORMANCE IS

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

IN TESTIMONY OF

THE LONG EXISTING AND SINCERE FRIENDSHIP

WITH WHICH HE HAS KINDLY DISTINGUISHED

HIS FAITHFUL SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Sketches of the nature and phœnomena of the Venereal Disease were chiefly intended to satisfy the enquires of such gentlemen as expressed an inclination to be made acquainted with the subject. But besides the object of gratifying a rational curiosity, the author is not without hopes, that it will be found in some degree useful, in enabling persons, not professionally informed, to judge of the real nature, progress, and tendency of venereal infection. For, certain it is, that many dangers may

ADVERTISEMENT.

be shunned, by a knowledge of WHAT IS POSSIBLE in the disease, and many deceptions removed with regard to a supposed security where it does not in reality exist. A detail of some particular facts which time and experiment have put in our possession, is all that is here attempted, yet such are, perhaps, of more real importance, than any theories of the disease that the most ingenious have hitherto been able to build upon them.

W. H.

*Chancery-Lane,
August 7, 1792.*

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ERRATA.

In page 7, line 11, for *such*, read "*some*."

To the last word of the Note page 10, add "*in this country*."

SKETCHES, &c.

Origin of the Venereal Disease.

THE sudden appearance in Europe of a disease so extraordinary and formidable as the Venereal Disease, it is natural to suppose, produced an infinite variety, and an almost ludicrous contrariety of opinions as to its nature and origin. Till its true history became somewhat developed, it was named, as might be expected, from that quarter whence it was supposed to have been imported, and hence was called the French disease, the Neapolitan disease, the Spanish pox, &c. but a more minute investigation, shewing the injustice of attributing its production to any one of these nations, at length brought

into use the more general name of Lues Venerea*.

* At a very early period in England, this disease was called a *brenning*, or burning. TURNER quotes a receipt, written three hundred years ago, for a "*Brenning of the Pyntyl*." From him are transcribed the following parts of an ancient record of the Court Leet in the borough of Southwark, when public stews or brothel-houses were permitted, within the manor, and under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Winchester. The last of these articles, being most to our purpose, shall take the lead:—

ITEM—"That no stewholder keep any woman within his house that hath any *sickness of brenning*, but that she be put out, upon pain of making a fyne unto the Lord of C shillings."

ITEM—"The women that be at common bordel to be seen every day what they be; and a woman that liveth by her body to come and goe where she list, only, according to ancient custom, she shall pay every week xiv pence for her chamber."

ITEM—"If any woman of the bordel let any man of his way, but sit still at the door, and let them go or come, and chose wider they wol; or if they draw any man by his gown, or by his hood, or by any odir thing, she shall make a fine unto the Lord of xx shillings."

ITEM—"That if any woman living by her body take any moneys tolye with a man, and shall not lye with him

As to it's antiquity, opinions are without number. It has been dated by some authors as far back as five centuries; others have supposed it almost coeval with man; whilst a much greater body of writers have maintained an opinion, that Christopher Columbus conferred this favour on his country and all Europe, as one of the happy consequences of his transatlantic discoveries, about the years 1493, or 1494 *.

It is neither very possible, nor very material to mankind, that this point should be decided; yet a very concise outline of the

till the morrow, she shall make a fyne of vi shillings and viii pence."

The singularity of these latter articles, will, no doubt, induce the reader to excuse their being added.

* "Novum morbi genus anno salutis nonagesimo sexto supra mille quadringentos à Christiana salute, non solum *Italiam*, sed fere totam *Europam*, irrepsit. Hoc ab *Hispania* incipiens, per *Italiam* ipsam primum, tum *Galliam*, cæterasque *Europæ* provincias latè diffusum, mortales quamplurimos occupavit." BENIVENIUS, cap. i.

various conjectures, relative to the phenomena of the disease and its supposed causes, set forth in the numerous treatises which appeared at that early period, may prove neither useless nor unamusing.

In attempting to account for the appearance of so strange and untoward a visitor, it is not surprising, that superstition should take the lead. Thus, by priests, it was said to be a peculiar mark of God's displeasure; by astrologers, to have arisen from a criminal conversation between Mars and Venus; and by physicians, to have been owing to a peculiar indisposition of the air.

When its communication, however, by an irregular commerce between the sexes became more accurately noticed, and that it existed, almost exclusively, amongst the most profligate of both, whilst discreet and continent persons remained free from it, these opinions gave way to an idea, not less un-

founded, though somewhat more credible, that it arose from an unbounded indulgence in venereal pleasures, which, with the help of local uncleanness in the parties, as it were *engendered* the disease *. But attentive observation, and the gradual knowledge of facts, at length convinced medical enquirers, that its nature was purely infectious, and that the communication of it depended upon actual contact.

Such then it is known to be in the present day, and considering the variety and peculiarity of its phænomena, of which we shall have occasion to speak hereafter, it is hardly

* Some of the arguments, however, with which this doctrine was combated, are not a little laughable ; and such, perhaps, will be deemed the grave, and, as he thought, most *incontrovertible* evidence brought by VICTORIUS, an Italian writer *de Morbo Gallico*, in the year 1551. He says he is “firmly persuaded, that *infection* is not absolutely necessary for producing the Venereal Disease, but that the *state of the air*, together with that of the putrid humours, is sufficient.” He then *proves* this by asserting, that he knew “some *honest and religious* NUNS, who were confined in the strictest manner, unfor-

wonderful that the knowledge we have acquired of it, imperfect as that knowledge is, should nevertheless have been the work of many ages.

Whether the Venereal Disease be not in some instances incurable ?

Formidable as we may consider the Venereal Disease, there are few, if any, instances of it's being incurable. If the patient has bodily strength, and a constitution not averse to the customary action of mercury ; if the disease appear in a pure state, and uncombined with any pre-existing affection of the habit ; and especially if an early attention be paid to the symptoms that occur ; there is scarcely one in the catalogue of human diseases, on the possibility of curing

fortunately contract the Venereal Disease from a peculiar state of the air, together with that of the putrid humours, and the weakness of their habit of body."

which we can more positively decide. All the cases said to have been venereal, and which have terminated fatally in certain instances, have, in reality, been of a nature totally different from a true Lues, although they may have originated in it. In those troublesome, tedious, unmanageable, and distressing cases, which equally exhaust the patient and the surgeon, and of which every practitioner of note must have had his share, this fact certainly obtains. In such, the first course of mercury commonly fails; a second and a third have no better success; yet if the patient has fortitude, and repeats the trial, allowing proper intervals and employing proper remedies to support his strength, he, as it were, stumbles upon a cure; but without the possibility of accounting for his case upon any known principle, or of reducing the train of adverse symptoms that have impeded it, to any existing rule in the medical art. These mixed sort of cases have certainly now and then proved fatal, as well

well as some cases of the true Lues, where its progress has been uninterrupted for a great length of time, and the constitution reduced to so low an ebb that mercury could not be exhibited with any effect. Such miserable instances, we occasionally see in workhouses and other receptacles of unhappy and neglected paupers; but in situations where the means of early relief are more attainable, we may almost assert that they never occur.

With what diseases the Lues Venerea is capable of being combined.

As in the cases already alluded to there are appearances in no respect similar to any particular description of disease, it is a matter of no little difficulty even to conjecture what are the specific diseases with which the Venereal Lues is capable of entering into combination. It has been conceived, that at

least two diseases admit of this, to wit, the scurvy and the scrofula. The former probably has been adduced, from the resemblance which mixed venereal ulcers commonly bear to what is denominated the scorbutic ulcer, and likewise from certain appearances on the skin, where scorbutic eruptions are supposed to be thrown out and to undergo an admixture with those of a venereal nature.

With the scrofula, however, we may fairly suppose this union to happen. There are few people in northern situations in whom the disposition to scrofula does not exist. Though that disease is not hereditary, the peculiar structure of body which is favourable to its production on the accession of an occasional cause, certainly is. Persons thus circumstanced, acquiring the venereal infection, are therefore liable to effects which cannot result from the disease in other habits where there exists no scrofulous tendency.

Mercury, the only remedy in venereal cases, is, unfortunately, a medicine to be interdicted in the scrofula, and where it is obliged to be administered copiously for the cure of one disease, it has a proportional effect either in producing the other, or in aggravating it if already existing. Hence those dreadful and protracted diseases already spoken of, which, beginning in a venereal infection, are thought such, though erroneously, to their termination; and hence the unmerited reputation acquired by some empirical remedies in their cure*. With these it may also be necessary to mention, certain supposed combinations of the venereal with rheumatic, paralytic, and tabid affections; in common language, venereal rheumatisms, venereal palsies, consumptions, epilepsies, &c. the existence of all which, I think, should rather be attributed

* I will take upon me to say that no remedy in which mercury does not enter as a component part ever effected the cure of a true venereal lues.

to the action of mercury on habits predisposed to these diseases.

With regard to venereal rheumatisms indeed the fact is certainly not admissible, since the great irritability brought on by the copious use of mercury disposes the body to that disease from the causes which give rise to it in common instances. Consumptions too arise from scrofulous indurations of the mesenteric glands, brought on by mercury. Paralytic affections may be accounted for by the extreme debility that remedy occasions in the system, and by its pernicious action upon the nerves*.

In opposition to this, however, I am

* I am inclined to think, that these effects *sometimes* arise from *lead*, with which mercury is but too commonly adulterated. Though the proportion of this pernicious metal may be comparatively small, it is the more certainly absorbed from its union with the mercury, and the diligence employed to make it enter the skin. Crude mercury should never be exhibited in any manner without previous purification.

bound to mention an instance, in which a gentleman, in a most hopeless state of paralytic affection some years ago, was perfectly cured by rubbing in about twenty ounces of mercurial ointment. But it is possible that this disease might arise from pressure made on the brain by some venereal node or exostosis shooting from the inner table of the skull, which may in like manner account for the epilepsies with which venereal patients have sometimes been attacked. The action of mercury in these cases would prove salutary, by its immediate effect of checking the growth, and in the end, of entirely removing those exuberant parts which occasioned the pressure*, and thus the cure

* A little time ago I attended the brother of a nobleman who had an epileptic attack in consequence, it is probable, of an incipient corona veneris; there was an external affection of the bone, and as, in such cases, the skull is sometimes penetrated through its whole substance by the disease, the fit was fairly referable to that cause. He had some subsequent attacks, but is now in perfect health.

would certainly be due to the remedy employed. But it must be allowed, that a palsy may be produced by more causes than one; and that the instance above cited, does not at all weaken the observation as far as it applies to the general fact.

Is the employment of mercury necessary in all stages of the Venereal Disease, and in what quantity ?

Mercury is undoubtedly necessary in all instances of the infection, except the gonorrhœa, which is local, and therefore requiring only local applications. In a clap, however, it is *possible* that some virus may enter the system, and such is sometimes the case when it has continued long or been injudiciously treated. But in all instances where an ulcerated surface has been formed by the action of venereal virus, or where there are other unequivocal signs of its absorption

into the circulation, the use of mercury is clearly indicated, notwithstanding the proofs which now and then occur, that a venereal chancre may exist and even occasion a bubo without any contamination of the mass of blood.

With regard to the quantity of mercury necessary and only *necessary* to be employed, it must be owned, surgeons are very much at a loss, and in their determination can only be actuated by their experience in corresponding cases, where a certain quantity, exhibited during the disease, and for a certain length of time afterwards, effected a permanent cure. A criterion by which to decide when a sufficient quantity of mercury has been administered is the greatest of all desiderata. In order to be certain that we have gained a certain point, we are compelled to go at all times beyond it, and in many instances, to urge its utmost powers in cases where perhaps no real necessity has existed.

It is not therefore surprizing that such havock should be made with the human constitution, by the use of a medicine of such extraordinary power, when administered, as we too often see it, by very unskilful hands*.

Whether the Venereal Disease has abated of its violence since its first introduction into Europe?

It is an opinion which has had the support of some able advocates, that the Venereal Disease is an exotic, brought into a situation not favourable to its growth and propaga-

* There is great reason to suspect that many of the very dreadful, and to us, *unusual* symptoms, ascribed by the ancients to the Venereal Disease, really proceeded from an *abuse of mercury*. The “Alopecia, decidentia barbæ ac superciliarum, oculorum prolapsus, unguium atque *dentium* quoque excidentia,” so *commonly happening* in their time, are circumstances scarcely referable to any case of the Venereal Disease as it exists at present, and seem more likely to have arisen from salivations violently excited and long continued.

tion, and that it will, in a course of years, wear out and be entirely exterminated. As the period of it's commencement can hardly be more remote than other events which are the subject of tradition and history, it is at least equally as likely to come to an end as other constituted things in the natural world, which are undergoing a continual, but imperceptible change. We are certain that *new* diseases are produced, and what would become of mankind if their abatement or cessation were not in some measure to keep pace with their accession? How would man endure the accumulation, bending onward, as he is, to his fate, and becoming from day to day more enfeebled and degenerate?

That the Venereal Disease would one day cease to scourge mankind, was a favourite topic with some writers early in the 16th century. PETER MAYNARD in particular, who wrote in 1518*, positively declares,

* Tract. de Morbo Gallico, cap. 3.

(though only on the evidence of certain *astrological* calculations, which it seems led him into this very notable prophecy) that the disease would last no longer than the year 1584. But within a period of 190 years after him, nearly a score of writers gave to the world their decided opinions in favour of this hitherto unaccomplished extinction of the venereal poison; and amongst others, was that most respectable physician of our own country, SYDENHAM.

We may also trace ASTRUC's opinion of this matter in the following passage from book ii, chap. 1, of his treatise:—"Something like this *might perhaps have been observed at the first eruption of the Venereal Disease, when the malignancy of it was so very violent.*"

TURNER likewise says—"Thus much of the original of this distemper, which, whence soever at first deriyed, is agreed on all sides

to have *abated very much* of it's former cruel fierceness, even after the first *seven years* of it's residence in a different clime; insomuch, as we have been told, that *our* pox is but a flea-bite to that of their's whom it *first visited*; which *then* made more havock and devastation in a few days than it does *now* in many years."

Yet admitting the possibility of this, and that, in European climates, the Venereal Disease exhausts itself, and becomes enfeebled like other exotics, still it is to be suspected, that we are exposed to a constant renewal of it in all it's native inveteracy, by our communication with that country to which we are indebted for it's introduction. What effects indeed may in a course of time be wrought on the powers of the disease by the reiterated impressions of mercury on the virus which perpetuates it, is not easy to say. It is in the power of art to obstruct what appears to be the established course of Nature in many

known instances, and to turn her aside from her own manifest intentions; and possibly the art of medicine may have this happy though imperceptible tendency, so as to avert the course of a severe disease, and at length relieve man, in some stage, more or less remote, of his posterity, from it's destructive ravages.

Nearly connected with this subject is an opinion, which we often hear of, that the Venereal Disease, as it exists at present, is not found to be equally violent in all the countries of Europe. A Neapolitan pox, for instance, is said to be incurable. But there can be little ground for this supposition, which may possibly have arisen from the more general prevalence of the disease in that country, in consequence of the countenance given, if writers of travels into Italy are to be credited, to intrigue and debauchery. The greater the number of persons infected with the Venereal Disease, the

greater of course must be the proportion of obstinate and inveterate cases that occur; and these being observed by travellers, may have led them to suppose the disease more terrible in its effects in that country than in any other. But in fact, there seem to be reasons why the very reverse of this should be the case. For the *scrofula* being a disease which most commonly interferes with the cure of the lues venerea in other situations, is in fact less likely to obstruct it in so warm a climate.

Whether Gonorrhœa and Lues are not distinct diseases?

It has been asserted, and maintained by many ingenious arguments, that gonorrhœa and lues venerea do not take their rise from the same, but from different kinds of virus; and that the matter produced by one disease,

is incapable, if *separately applied*, of producing the other.

The latest advocate for this doctrine is an ingenious medical professor in Edinburgh *, and his arguments are principally these :

1st, It appears, by attending to the history of the Venereal Disease on it's first introduction into Europe, that the gonorrhœa was known many years before the lues venerea; whilst, in China, the lues venerea preceded the gonorrhœa by a very long period. In the island of Otaheite the same thing obtains, for there the gonorrhœa is unknown, though the lues venerea is exceedingly common among the inhabitants †.

* Dr. Duncan.

† This is the language held by the Doctor in his *Medical Cases*; but I apprehend it is not quite correct in point of fact, as I am informed by my friend Mr. DAVID SAMWELL, who was surgeon of Captain Cook's ship the DISCOVERY, that the natives of all the newly discovered islands that he visited in the South Seas had

2dly, The progress and natural termination of the two diseases are exceedingly different; the lues venerea going on, if unrestrained by mercury, to a termination certainly fatal, whilst the other, after existing for a length of time, admits of a spontaneous abatement of the symptoms, and at last ceases entirely.

3rdly, The treatment required for the cure of each is essentially different; which

the disease in every form, and in fact, had it before the voyages of Capt. Cook were even attempted.—I am glad indeed of this opportunity of gratifying the zeal of my ingenious friend, in a matter which so nearly affects the credit of British navigators; and I cannot more effectually do it than by transcribing a supplemental note in his own hand-writing, affixed to his printed narrative of Capt. Cook's death. It runs thus—"Since the publication of the foregoing remarks, several English navigators have visited the Sandwich Islands and received from the natives *a full and clear confirmation* of the truth of my opinion, that the Venereal Disease was known among them *before they were discovered by CAPTAIN COOK*. Thus far is proved beyond a doubt. I also *think*, that future enquiries will prove the same malady to have existed in *all* the South Sea islands, before they were discovered by Europeans."

it would not be if both were the effects of the same poison. We should by no means employ mercurial frictions, for instance, in curing a gonorrhœa; nor should we prescribe remedies adapted for the removal of the latter, in a confirmed lues.

To strengthen the former of these arguments the authority of *Sydenham* might also be adduced. He asserts that the lues venerea had existed for the space of a whole century before the gonorrhœa, the symptoms of which he particularly describes. If these facts be really as they are represented, they speak forcibly in behalf of the opinion that gonorrhœa and lues are distinct diseases.

But other writers, particularly Mr. Hunter, have maintained a contrary doctrine, and as these have had recourse to actual experiment to prove their opinions, they demand no small share of our confidence on that account. By these, it appears that the

matter of a gonorrhœa has produced lues, and that the virus taken from persons affected with lues has produced gonorrhœa. Nothing, one would suppose, could be more decisive than this; and yet, as *any* stimulating matter introduced into the urethra will produce a discharge and many of the symptoms which characterise gonorrhœa, we may I think be allowed to question the correctness of this decision, at least, in some of its parts *.

Whether the disease can be communicated otherwise than by the commerce of the sexes.

Many persons suppose the Venereal Disease to be communicable by other means than actual coition, and in this they are not

* I have engaged in some experiments on venereal matter by chemical analysis, and hope, on some future day, to make this subject more clear.

mistaken. An absolute connection between the sexes is not necessary to the production either of the gonorrhœa or lues, but only the simple application of venereal virus to certain parts of the body not capable of resisting it's action.

The application of the smallest portion, no matter by what means *, to the urethra, will produce a clap, as will be noticed hereafter; and in like manner, a shanker may be formed by touching any part of the body, that is not defended by the cuticle or outer skin, with venereal virus. Thus the matter from a venereal ulcer in the mouth may communicate the disease by kissing; for the lips not being defended like the more exposed parts of the body, are capable, their inner surface especially, of being acted upon

* The disease has been caught by matter received from the edge of a chamber-pot; and Mr. Hunter relates a decisive case, where a clap was the consequence of going to a necessary after an infected person.

by any particle of virus that may adhere to them *. Even the common skin is sometimes eroded by it, as we very frequently have occasion to see on the body of the penis, where very inveterate shankers make their appearance. Any part of the body indeed may have suffered a slight loss of the cuticle, and in that state it is exposed to all the mischiefs of venereal contamination, as are the fingers of surgeons if any slight scratch or wound has been accidentally inflicted on them. For in these cases, the same process takes place as is known to succeed the inoculation of the matter of the small-pox in the arm of an infant: the virus remains for some days, acting insensibly on the part, till at length it is absorbed into the circulation and produces the disease. When a finger thus receives the infection, a bubo in the armpit is commonly the consequence.

* Children have caught the disease by sucking nurses whose nipples were in a state of venereal ulceration; and nurses are liable to the same accident from the mouths of infected infants.

That Gonorrhœa may take place in other parts of the body besides the urethra.

A venereal gonorrhœa may certainly be excited by an application of the virus to any part of the body whose covering is of a structure similar to the urethra. Even parts whose surfaces are not strictly *secreting* surfaces are capable of this, as the glans penis and inner prepuce which are now and then affected with gonorrhœa. When this happens, it must arise from the gonorrhœal virus having failed to attach itself to the mouth of the urethra; and here we may observe, that if gonorrhœal and pocky matter were the same, shankers would be produced, and not a gonorrhœa, by its application to the glans penis.

If venereal matter be accidentally applied to the eyes, as by wiping them with a foul handkerchief, a gonorrhœa will take place

in them, and a discharge of an infectious quality similar to that of a clap from the urethra. What other mucous coverings of the body may be affected in this way does not seem to have been ascertained; but it is highly probable, that if venereal virus were applied to any of them, in a situation where it might remain undisturbed for a sufficient length of time, that a gonorrhœa would be produced*.

* The following cases however shew, that venereal matter *may* be brought into contact with mucous coverings of the body without this consequence.

“ A gentleman had a most violent gonorrhœa in which both the inflammation and discharge were remarkably great. He had also a chordee which was very troublesome at night when in bed. In order to cool the parts and keep them clean, he had a small basin of milk by the bed side, in which, when the chordee was troublesome, he got up and dipped or washed the penis. This operation he frequently repeated in the night. Under such complaints he allowed a young lady to sleep with him. Her custom was to have a basin of tea to drink in the morning before she got up, but unfortunately for the lady, she one morning drank the milk instead of the tea. She was vomited, but not till more than eight hours after drinking the milk and water, and what came up was

That affection of the eye which is called venereal Ophthalmia, and which frequently terminates in blindness, is a disease concerning which authors have certainly fallen into very great mistakes. *Swediaur*, a writer of some ability in other instances, ascribes the venereal Ophthalmia to the *retro-pulsion* of a gonorrhœa. This act of retro-pulsion is

nothing but slime, mucus, or water, the milk being digested." Particular attention was paid in this instance for many months, but nothing uncommon happened. (Vide Hunter's Treatise, p. 291.)

This is preceded by the case of a boy, who stole a cup of milk in which *shankers* had been washed, and drank it with impunity ; and to these I might add a case, similar in several respects, but in which the principal facts were not so precisely ascertained. I would account for the failure of infection in these cases, by saying, that the surfaces over which the venereal virus had to pass, though of a structure, as one would suppose, perfectly well adapted to the purposes of infection, were surfaces producing copious and rapid secretions, so that no particle of the virus could find a resting place any where, but was hurried through the whole alimentary canal, and at length evacuated out of the body. It may be considered remarkable, however, that it was not absorbed, along with the nutritious parts of the food, by the lacteals, and carried into the blood ; a

not to be understood ; and to save the disease so long and circuitous a journey, I should rather suppose it to originate in a *gonorrhœa* of the eye, arising from some cause already stated, and that the extreme delicacy and sensibility of the part on which the venereal virus exerts it's action, subjects the patient to those unhappy consequences, which sometimes take place before the infectious matter can be dislodged either spontaneously by the increased discharge, or by the application of surgical remedies. It is indeed a *possible* thing that a particle of venereal virus, floating at large in the

circumstance, which might have exposed these patients, at least to similar evils, with those which arise when the virus is absorbed in the common way. But the lacteals have probably a discriminating quality which does not belong to the external absorbents, and we may consider it as their peculiar character, to take up only what is beneficial and nutritious to the body. The discharge from every diseased part being excrementitious in it's nature, there can be little improbability in the conjecture, that the venereal matter was rejected by the lacteals on that account.

circulating system, *may* be deposited on the eye. But the general law observed by the disease, in the progressive appearance of the several symptoms which distinguish it, forbids our assent to the probability of such an event ever happening.

The degree of virulence usually estimated by the colour of the discharge in a Gonorrhœa.

It is a prevailing notion with patients, and is even sanctioned by the declarations of some writers on the Venereal Disease, that the degree of virulence in a gonorrhœa may be decided on by the different appearances of the discharge on the patient's linen. It is singular that this should have been so universally received as a fact, since it has certainly no foundation in truth. The various hues of a gonorrhœal discharge, from that of unchanged mucus to a deep yellow, or

green, are to be observed in the matter flowing from all other surfaces that have a mucous covering, and that happen to be affected with inflammation. It is the degree of *inflammation* only that is ascertained by the greater or less colour, and not the degree of venereal contamination. The handkerchief of a person affected with catarrh will exhibit all the variety of appearances that are common in a gonorrhœa, and nothing is more frequent than for gleets of long standing, where there is decidedly no infection existing, to vary in colour according as the patient happens to be irregular in diet, costive in his body, heated by too much exercise, or affected with symptoms of general inflammation from accidental causes. A diminution of colour in a gonorrhœal discharge, is therefore only favourable, inasmuch as it evinces a diminution of the inflammation; and thus far indeed it is a change of a very desirable nature, and much to be relied on.

How long the discharge of a Gonorrhœa remains infectious?

It is a natural transition from our last subject to inquire, how long the running of a clap remains infectious and capable of communicating the disease to another person. It is very certain, that a gonorrhœal discharge loses the power of infection a considerable time before it entirely ceases; but, to mark the precise period when it becomes bland and incapable of exciting venereal inflammation is perhaps impossible.

There is reason to believe, though we are accustomed to consider the whole of the discharge *venereal*, that only a very minute proportion of actual virus exists in it. All the organs of secretion in the affected part are stimulated to action by the first particle received, and these yield an abundance of mucous fluids, which mix with, and carry

forward the venereal matter, nearly as fast as it is formed. A popular writer on this subject has adduced several instances to prove, that the power of infecting may remain for a long time without the party's knowing it, or having any of the usual symptoms. The most singular of these, is the case of a Magdalen girl, who certainly retained the power of infecting, though apparently cured of her disease, during the whole period of her residence in that humane receptacle, (which is two years) and gave a gonorrhœa to the first man who had a connection with her. This phenomenon is accounted for by supposing the parts of generation so habituated to the venereal irritation, as no longer to be affected by it, or to exhibit any of the usual appearances. These facts shew the difficulty, not merely of ascertaining when a discharge ceases to be venereal, but even when the patient has wholly got rid of the power of infecting. Nothing indeed but actual experience can ascertain it, and even

this would go no way in establishing a rule in other instances.

Whether infection can be communicated in the interval between receiving the disease and the appearance of the symptoms?

It is a question very frequently put to surgeons, and a question often of very great consequence, whether, in the interval between the contracting and appearance of the Venereal Disease a connection with a found woman is likely to prove hurtful to her. Married persons are often particularly interested in this enquiry, in which however little more can be said, than that those particles of virus which remain latent till the disease appears, may certainly be participated with the latter woman, and thus the infection may take place. Happily however it much more frequently turns out, that this accident does *not* occur.

Whether the disease can be transferred to an uninfected person ?

It is the most vulgar of all errors, and indeed prevalent with few except the most unlettered of the people, to suppose, that a venereal infection can be got rid of by the patient's having a connection with a clean woman. An opinion so preposterous indeed would hardly warrant a moment's investigation, were it not that the attempt may possibly, in some accidental instance, prevent an experiment equally cruel, base, and unavailing. It is hardly necessary to insist, that, in such a case, the disease will be *communicated* but not *transferred*; and that an injury will be inflicted without any consequences in favour of so monstrous a doctrine. Women however have been known to transfer the seeds of the disease, from themselves to another, without any consciousness on their part, of the danger they have thereby es-

caped. A woman, for instance, who has recently received particles of venereal virus, may have them completely taken away by her next gallant, and thus become the medium of infection, without being at all affected with the disease herself. This circumstance is capable of reconciling many instances where patients are puzzled to account for their being infected.

Supposed remedies for the cure of Lues Venerea without mercury.

There is reason to believe, that, in some countries where the Venereal Disease exists, the cure of it by the use of mercury is not known. It follows of course either that those who get the disease fall victims to it, or else that they are possessed of remedies equally unknown to us, by which they obtain a cure.

The American Indians are said to be possessed, not of one, but of many remedies for this purpose. The natives of the Sandwich and other islands in the South Seas, to whom the Venereal Disease has long been familiar, also have methods of curing it to which Europeans are strangers, and which it would be very desirable to obtain a knowledge of. An ingenious gentleman of the medical profession who visited that part of the world, and who had unfortunately contracted a gonorrhœa, made a very laudable attempt to get some information on the subject from the natives, and with a view of doing it, as he thought, in the most effectual manner, he desired to become the patient of one of their priests, who, by the way, are the only persons there who administer medicine. The result of his application however was by no means successful; nor could the wary practitioner, whose art abounded with mysteries and secrets, be prevailed on to communicate any thing worthy of notice. On that occasion,

certain herbs were directed to be boiled, and the steam received on the parts affected, by the patient's sitting on the vessel. This, it seems, is their common treatment, and it is very reconcileable to our own ideas of the cure of a *gonorrhœa*, where *any* means of abating it's inflammatory state are worthy of being adopted. But we are still to learn the *internal medicine* which they must of necessity employ in the cure of the venereal *lues*.

Much has been said, by ancient writers, of certain remedies with which the vegetable kingdom supplies us, for the cure of the Venereal Disease. These are guaicum, sarsaparilla, china, bardana, aconitum, cicuta, mezereon, &c. But the ample trials they have undergone, have deservedly brought them into disesteem when employed as specifics for the true *lues*; though their effects, as co-operants with mercury, in spurious

and mixed cases, are certainly to be commended.

Among other remedies that have lately had an extensive trial is Opium ; and I fear it has been at the expence of some lives, that we have acquired the knowledge of it's absolute inefficacy as an antivenereal, though it is, no doubt, a powerful auxiliary to mercury. The root of the *astragalus excapus* has also been tried in Germany, and some accounts are given of it's uses, but the success which attended these experiments does not appear to have been sufficiently uniform to entitle this remedy to a larger share of our confidence than others of the vegetable class whose merits are already decided on.

Whether all the preparations of Mercury be equally effectual in the cure of the disease?

As the preparations of mercury are ex-

ceedingly numerous and these exhibited by practitioners with very little regard to preference, it should seem as if the cure of the disease did not depend upon any particular selection. It is supposed, and perhaps justly, that if mercury can be made to enter the system, it is neither material by what passage or under what particular form ; and indeed experience has tended to convince us, that the disease *may* be cured, by almost any of the preparations in common use.

Mercury is compounded by triture with honey, sugar, mucilages, and gums and resins of various kinds, and these are, upon the whole, preferable to the preparations made of it by chemical process. Of this latter sort are the various combinations with the nitrous, marine, vitriolic and acetous acids. It is also prepared by triture with alkaline earths, which form a very eligible remedy ; with sulphur, in which it's specific qualities are in a great measure lost ; and

lastly, with fatty substances, in which form it is employed for external frictions.

Besides these there are preparations of mercury *per se*, which are, I believe justly, preferred by many practitioners. Mercury calcined by a slow and long continued heat is of this kind; and it is on that, on the preparation by triture with calcareous earth, and on the simple preparations with saccharine or mucilaginous substances, that we ought to place our chief dependence when mercury is to be taken internally. These are free from that immediate activity which distinguishes the combinations of mercury with the various acids, and from which nothing is added to the specific excellence of the remedy, but much to its power of disturbing the stomach and intestines.

The employment however of mercury in the marine acid has had many defenders, and no one can hesitate to consider it as a most

useful preparation in particular situations of the Venereal Disease. There is no preparation whose powers, generally speaking, more effectually address themselves to the symptoms of the disease; but its power of destroying the virus in the constitution, or, in other language, of eradicating the disease itself, have been called in question with very great appearance of justice *.

The following case however will shew, that our doubts concerning its anti-syphilitic qualities should not obtain in all possible instances; and it will at the same time evince, what is the principal object of this section, that all the preparations of mercury are *not* of equal efficacy in *all instances*.

An elderly gentleman, very corpulent, and of what is called a scorbutic habit, had

* Sir John Pringle, who had great experience of this remedy, denied its power of *radically curing* the lues venerea.

a considerable shanker on the edge of the prepuce. He rubbed in a sufficient quantity of mercurial ointment to produce a very considerable forenefs in the mouth, which was kept up for near three weeks, at the end of which time the shanker was nearly as bad as at first. As he was unable to endure the forenefs of his mouth any longer, and was compelled to take a journey into the country, I directed him to discontinue the mercurial frictions entirely. He returned at the end of a fortnight, but with the shanker in the same state as at first, notwithstanding the topical use of mercurial remedies to it; and as the inunctions formerly used had had so little good effect, he was directed to take the muriated mercury in such doses as did not disagree with the stomach. In a week after this course commenced the shanker began to heal; in three weeks it wholly disappeared; and, after a little longer continuance of the remedy, he was perfectly cured.

This instance is selected out of many that might be produced, and is preferred on account of the striking inequality which many will be disposed to attribute to the powers of the two preparations employed ; the mercurial frictions being usually deemed the most, and the muriated mercury internally the least to be depended on, in cases where the specific action of mercury on the constitution is so obviously demanded.

Were the different preparations of mercury to be put down in the order of their several merits, perhaps the following would be a just estimate of them :

Preparations of mercury by calcination.

Preparations by triture with alkaline earths.

Preparations by triture with saccharine or mucilaginous substances.

Preparations with vegetable acid.

Precipitate of calomel with volatile alkali.

Muriated mercury.

Calomel.

There is certainly no mode of employing mercury equal to that of rubbing it into the skin, but as even that will sometimes prove ineffectual, we must have recourse to some one or other of the preparations for internal use. Mercury will sometimes enter the system by the absorbents of the alimentary canal when those of the skin are disinclined to its reception, and as experience seems to speak in behalf of its most uncombined and unaltered state, those preparations which consist only of a minute division of its parts, are certainly deserving of the first trial. These however will occasionally fail, and in that case, recourse must be had to some other; and it will be found, that such trials will very frequently and unexpectedly succeed.

Use and security of Prophylactics.

In enquiring whether there is any injury to be apprehended from the use of prophylactics, we are to take for granted, that remedies of this kind really exist ; though in the course of my practice, I can take upon upon me to assert, that there is not a single advertised compound of this sort, that has not in some instance or other proved a deception. However, whether remedies of this class are or are not to be depended upon in the way of preventing venereal infection, there is a fact of which all who are credulous enough to employ them ought to be apprised ; namely, that they destroy the *sensibility* of the parts to which they are applied, and by a free repetition, inevitably produce effects, equally fatal to enjoyment and procreation. From a present security purchased at so *dear a rate*, who is there that will not turn with horror and repugnance ?

THE END.

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